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NAHR'S POSITION

CONFIDENTIAL

30 January 1957

NSC BRIEFING

I. Three months after the Anglo-French-Israeli effort to topple Nasser from his pedestal, Egypt's boss still appears to stand firm.

There are, however, a few cracks to be seen.

A. Bickering and recrimination within Egypt's armed forces--set off both by the military debacle on the ground in Sinai and the absence of air defense over Cairo and Port Said--still continues: as a result, there are probably several disaffected military groups in Egypt.

1. The most recent symptom of this disaffection was the arrest of a group of armored and cavalry officers early in January. [REDACTED] this was a small group which vaguely felt it should halt a national drift toward communism.

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B. Egypt's other major weakness is the worsening economic situation. This is particularly irritating to Nasser, who is most at home in conspiratorial politics but finds economics frustrating.

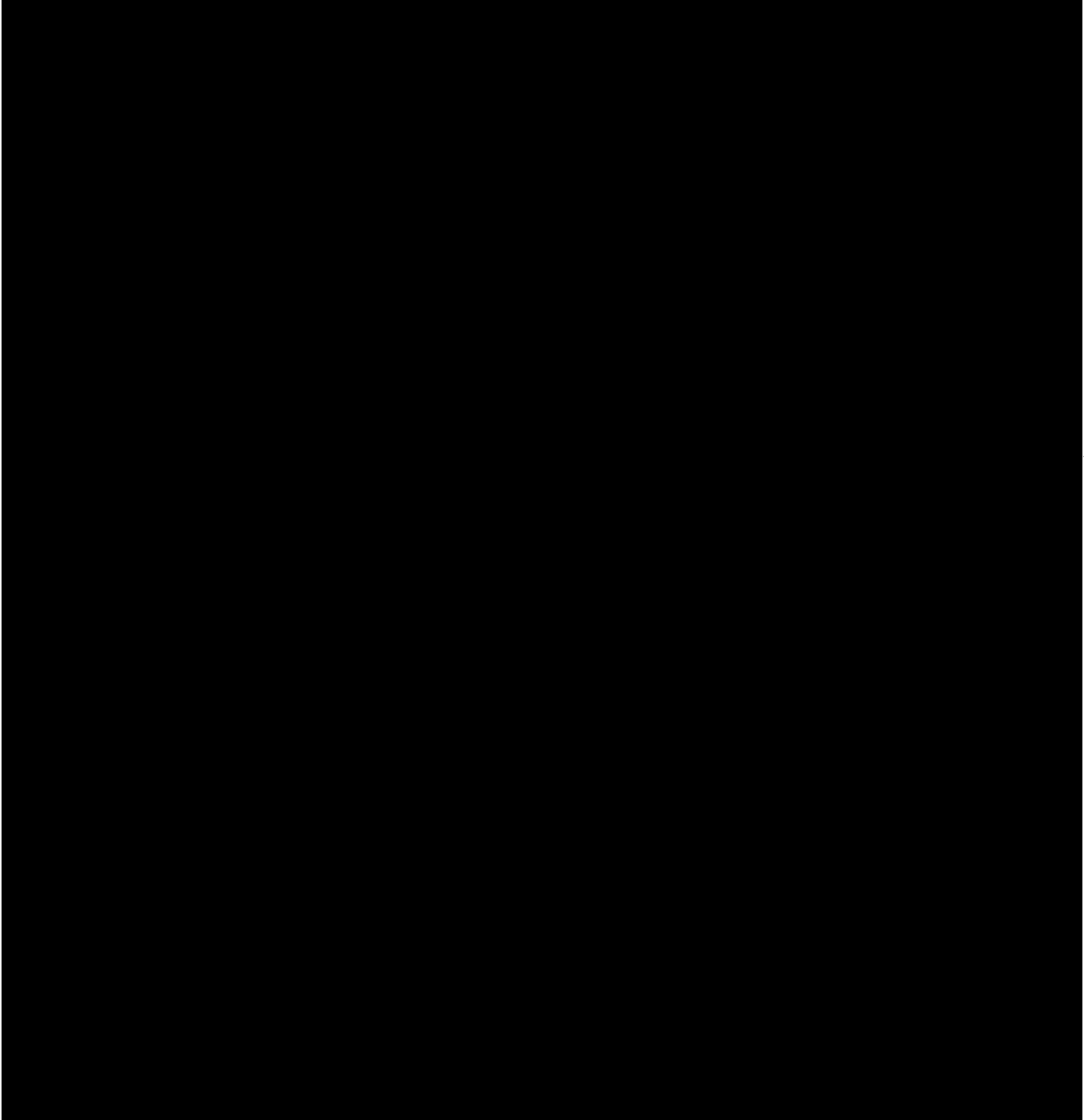
1. For example, Nasser's main attack on Egypt's present economic problems has been his "Egyptianization" decree (aimed at foreign ownership of Egyptian businesses on the ground that such firms engaged in espionage and interference in Egypt's affairs).

2. This move--basically political--has done nothing to build up Egypt's diminishing foreign exchange balance (now

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II. This combination of military and economic grievances has stimulated anti-Nasser elements in Egypt to plot against his regime.



D. A danger remains that the uncertainty surrounding a coup attempt by relatively conservative groups might be exploited by extremists—including local Communists (some of whom still held the arms issued to the populace at the time of the Anglo-French attack)—to stage a coup of their own.

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K. On balance, however, we consider Nasser's internal position to be reasonably solid.

III. Externally, Nasser's position is divided. His policies and person enjoy widespread popular support in the other Arab states.

A. To the man-in-the-street, Nasser is a symbol of the Arab underdog standing up to the West.

1. Arab propaganda (by no means all of it Egyptian) apparently has convinced the masses outside Egypt that Nasser's forces did not suffer a defeat at the hands of Israel, the British and the French.

B. In contrast to this general mass popularity, Nasser's standing with his Arab neighbors' governments ranges from wholehearted support to clearcut hostility.

1. The Syrians lead the partisan parade. As prime minister Aouli reported last week, Syria seeks not only a common Syrian-Egyptian policy but positive organic union of the two countries.

2.

3. Jordan, which expects an EES subsidy after termination of its UK treaty, has nonetheless shown clear reluctance to follow the Egyptian lead. King Hussein has repeatedly stated he hopes to replace his present pro-Egyptian

cabinet with a more moderate one. So far, however, the King has not found ground solid enough to support such a move.

C. Among Nasser's Arab neighbors whose governments oppose him are the following:

1. Lebanon: This government has been so alarmed by Egyptian "imperialism" that president Chamoun has asked for Western arms to protect Lebanon against Egyptian and Syrian pressure. The Lebanese prime minister has asked the US to protest to Cairo and Damascus regarding their subversive activities in Lebanon, and has issued a courageous statement supporting the recent US policy statement on the Middle East.
2. Iraq: Nuri's government is Egypt's bitterest opponent in the Arab world, although even Nuri felt compelled to issue statements supporting Egypt against its "aggressors." The Iraqi government has welcomed the US Middle East policy declaration as a guarantee of US support against Egypt and Syria, as well as against the Soviet Union.
3. Libya & Sudan: Both governments have told us of their distrust of Egypt and resentment over Nasser's interference in their internal affairs.

D. Elsewhere in the Middle East, both Turkey and Iran strongly oppose Egypt and Nasser.

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1. Turkish president Bayar has described Nasr as a real threat to the Middle East, 

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2. The Shah of Iran is convinced that Nasr is plotting the downfall of the monarchies of the Middle East. Most of the Shah's advisers equate Nasr with Mossadeq. The Shah is fearful, however, that to replace Nasr by force would invite worse evils.

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NBC BRIEFING

30 January 1957

NASR'S POSITION

I. Nasr still riding high, but internal pressures rising.

A. In Egypt's armed forces--bickering over war mistakes, some disaffection.

1. Most recent evidence: Cavalry officers arrested.

B. In economic situation, things going from bad to worse--Nasr out of element here.

II. Combination of both opens door to plotting.

A.

B.

Any plot would need strong army support, plus mobilization of indifferent masses, for success.

C. Danger remains that Communists, other extremists might take advantage of confusion for coup of own.

III. Nasr's external position: Arab people for him; governments less sure.

A. Syrian Gov't strongly pro-Nasr; Saud somewhat doubtful, Jordan Gov't lukewarm.

B. Lebanon, Iraq Gov'ts oppose him.

C. Turkey, Iran feel he must go.

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